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Claims:

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

Please cancel claims 1-11, 12, 18, 20 and 24 without prejudice or dedication.

1. (canceled)

2. (canceled)

3. (canceled)

4. (canceled)

5. (canceled)

6. (canceled)

7. (canceled)

8. (canceled)

9. (canceled)

10. (canceled)

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11. (canceled)

12. (canceled)

13. (amended) The method of claim ~~14~~ ~~42~~ wherein the act of revising precedes detecting a failure.

14. (amended) ~~The method of claim 12~~ A method for protecting a route from an active line card in a first router having a plurality of line cards to an active line card in a second router having a plurality of line cards comprising:

_____ providing a protection line card in the first router in connection with a protection line card in the second router;

_____ detecting a failure of the active line card in the first router;

_____ revising protection association information stored in the plurality of line cards of the first router such that messages directed through a fabric of the first router to the active line card in the first router are also directed through the fabric to said protection line card; and

_____ further comprising revising protection association information stored in the plurality of line cards of the second router such that messages directed through a fabric of the second router to the active line card in the second router are also directed to said protection line card in the second router.

15. (amended) The method of claim ~~14~~ ~~42~~ further comprising disabling the active line card physical card interface and enabling the protection line card physical card interface.

16. (amended) ~~The method of claim 12~~ A method for protecting a route from an active line card in a first router having a plurality of line cards to an active line card in a second router having a plurality of line cards comprising:

_____ providing a protection line card in the first router in connection with a protection line card in the second router;

_____ detecting a failure of the active line card in the first router;

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revising protection association information stored in the plurality of line cards of the first router such that messages directed through a fabric of the first router to the active line card in the first router are also directed through the fabric to said protection line card; and

wherein said act of detecting comprises failing to detect an expected periodic heartbeat signal from the active line card.

17. (amended) ~~The method of claim 12~~ A method for protecting a route from an active line card in a first router having a plurality of line cards to an active line card in a second router having a plurality of line cards comprising:

providing a protection line card in the first router in connection with a protection line card in the second router;

detecting a failure of the active line card in the first router;

revising protection association information stored in the plurality of line cards of the first router such that messages directed through a fabric of the first router to the active line card in the first router are also directed through the fabric to said protection line card; and

wherein the protection association information is found in descriptions stored in the plurality of line cards and further comprising adding a header with data from one of the descriptors to a message so that the message is directed to said protection line card.

18. (canceled)

19. (amended) The protection method of claim ~~22~~ 18 further comprising configuring the protection line card with inbound path tables that are clones of inbound path tables in the active line card.

20. (canceled)

21. (amended) The protection method of claim ~~22~~ 20 wherein the act of detecting occurs before the act of revising.

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22. (amended) ~~The protection method of claim 20~~ In a router having a plurality of line cards connected by a fabric, a protection method comprising:

revising descriptors stored in the plurality of line cards to indicate an association between an active one of the line cards and a protection one of the line cards;

receiving, in one of the line cards, a message bound for the active line card;

addressing the message using the revised descriptors such that the message is directed through the fabric to the active line card and also to the protection line card; and

detecting a failure of the active line card, wherein the act of detecting comprises
~~comprising~~ failing to detect ~~an~~ expected periodic heartbeat signal from the active line card.

23. (amended) The protection method of claim 22 ~~20~~ further comprising disabling the active line card physical card interface and enabling the protection line card physical card interface.

24. (canceled)